

Talkeetna Area—High Adventure

Directions

Talkeetna is 115 miles north of Anchorage and 143 miles south of Fairbanks. At milepost 98.7 of the Parks Highway, take the Talkeetna Spur Road 14 miles to the east.

History

Talkeetna began as a turn-of-the-century gold mining town and trading post. The town's population peaked during the expansion of the Alaska Railroad to Nenana. Following World War I, the town declined until it found new life as an aviation and supply base for climbers on Mount McKinley. The buildings of the original town were placed on the National Historic Register in 1993.

Activities

Talkeetna is an important air-taxi center, providing Mount McKinley flightseeing and glacier landings, as well as fly-in fishing trips. The area also offers a wide variety of outdoor activities such as horseback riding, rafting, hiking and fishing. In winter it's a great place to see the northern lights, go dog mushing or cross-country skiing.

Visit local museums and the National Park Service ranger station, where climbers must register. The ranger station features photographs on the climbing history of Mount McKinley and memorabilia from past ascents. A climbers' memorial is located in the town cemetery across from the airfield.

Favorite places to fish are Clear Creek, Fish Creek (handicapped accessible) and Prairie Creek.

Facilities

All facilities other than the ranger station are commercial. Public campgrounds are located 52 miles north in Denali State Park or 32 miles south in Willow Creek State Recreation Area.

For More Information

Talkeetna Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 334
Talkeetna, Alaska 99676
907-733-2330
www.talkeetna-chamber.com

Talkeetna Ranger Station
P.O. Box 588
Talkeetna, AK 99676
Phone: 907-733-2231
Fax: 907-733-1465
www.nps.gov/dena



Denali State Park

Directions

Located at mile 132 on the Parks Highway, Denali State Park is a two-and-a-half-hour drive north of Anchorage. The park's western fringes can be reached from the Petersville Road at mile 115. High clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended beyond mile 18.

History

Denali State Park covers 325,240 acres—almost one-half the size of Rhode Island—and offers recreational opportunities ranging from roadside camping to wilderness exploration.

Denali State Park has superb vantage points for viewing the breathtaking heart of the Alaska Range. Perhaps the best roadside view is at mile 135.2 of the Parks Highway. Here, an interpretive bulletin board names the mountains and other terrain features. Other excellent views of Mount McKinley and the Alaska Range are found at mile 147.1, 158.1 and 162.3.

Cabins and Campgrounds

Two log cabins on Byers Lake are available for rent year-round. Byers Lake Cabin #1 is accessible by car; Cabin #2 is a 1/2-mile walk from the parking area. Byers Lake Campground offers 74 sites with toilets, drinking water and a boat launch. There are 20 other camping sites located at both the upper and lower end of the park.

Activities

The park is known for its views of Mount McKinley. Other recreational opportunities include camping, hiking, backpacking, berry picking, fishing, hunting, and river kayaking. Winter activities include skiing, dog mushing and snowmachining.

Trailheads are located at Upper Troublesome Creek (mile 137.6), Byers Lake (mile 147), Ermine Hill (mile 156.5) and Little Coal Creek (mile 163.9). The K'esugi Ridge-Troublesome Creek Trail is 36 miles long with an elevation gain of 3,500 feet. Above timberline the trail is marked by rock cairns, but map reading skills or GPS are recommended.

Visitor Center

The visitor center at the Alaska Veterans Memorial, milepost 147.1, has information on the park's history, natural resources and hiking routes.

For More Information

Alaska State Parks
Mat-Su/Copper Basin Area
HC 32, Box 6706
Wasilla, AK 99654
Phone: 907-745-3975
Fax: 907-745-0938
www.alaskastateparks.org



Denali Highway—Road to Adventure

Directions

Take the Parks Highway to Cantwell (209 miles from Anchorage, 123 miles from Fairbanks) and follow signs for the Denali Highway. The highway is generally open mid-May to October 1.

History

The Denali Highway was the original road into Denali National Park before the Parks Highway was built. The highway also provides access to archaeological sites at Tangle Lakes, access to the Gulkana Wild River and the Delta Wild and Scenic River on the Paxson end of the Highway.

Activities

Summer visitors will find hiking, fishing, sightseeing, bicycling and floating opportunities. During the winter, the highway is popular with snowmachiners and dog mushers.

Camping

There are two, non-reservable campgrounds at each end of the highway with over 20 campsites each. The maximum stay at these campgrounds is 14 days and they are very popular during the hunting season. For additional information call 907-271-5555.

Facilities

Along the highway are several viewpoints, interpretive signs and waysides with outhouses. Planning your stops is important as there are few trees to hide behind along the road.

For More Information

Bureau of Land Management
Glennallen District Office
P.O. Box 147
Glennallen, AK 99588
907-822-3217
www.glennallen.ak.blm.gov/DenaliHwy





Denali National Park and Preserve

Located at mile 237 of the Parks Highway, Denali National Park and Preserve is renowned for its spectacular vistas, abundant wildlife and backcountry adventures. The park offers six million acres of trailless, undisturbed wild lands. The Visitor Center is located just one mile down the Park Road and is open from May to September. During the summer, shuttle buses provide transportation into the heart of the park. A number of campgrounds offer visitors overnight experiences: Riley Creek Campground with 146 sites is only one mile from the Parks Highway. Some services are available in the park, others can be found just north of the park toward the town of Healy or south in the town of Cantwell. Camping is permitted at Riley Creek year-round, although services are limited off-season.

For more information, write for a copy of the *Alpenglow*, Denali's park visitor guide, or contact the park:

Denali National Park and Preserve

P.O. Box 9

Denali Park, AK 99755

907-683-2294

www.nps.gov/dena



Fairbanks Area

Directions

Fairbanks is located 358 miles north of Anchorage.

History

After Felix Pedro discovered gold in 1902, Fairbanks emerged as a support base for miners. The town changed during World War II as the military established a presence in this northern city. Following the war, the University of Alaska Fairbanks expanded in scope and importance, changing from a mining college to a leading institution in geophysics and engineering. In the 1970s, oil usurped gold as the more important resource, strengthening ties between Fairbanks and the oil-rich Arctic. Today, Fairbanks still reflects a diverse history involving the military, mineral extraction and scientific research.

Activities

Fairbanks is the gateway to the Arctic and the heart of the Interior. Visitors wishing to travel to the Arctic Circle, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or the Arctic Ocean do so from here.

The White Mountain National Recreation Area, the Chena River State Recreation Area and the Pinnell Mountain Recreation Trail provide backcountry opportunities just outside the city. These areas offer dog mushing, snowmachining and cross-country skiing in the winter, and fishing, boating, hiking, horseback riding and climbing during the summer.

Public boat ramps are located at Chena River State Recreation Site and at the Whitefish Campground in the Lower Chatanika River State Recreation Area.

Camping

The Bureau of Land Management operates 12 cabins in the White Mountains National Recreation Area. The State of Alaska operates six cabins and a nonprofit organization runs an additional 12 cabins in the Chena River State Recreation Area.

Campgrounds are located at Cripple Creek, Mount Prindle and Ophir in the Chena River Recreation Area.

For More Information

Fairbanks Alaska Public Lands Information Center
250 Cushman, Suite 1A
Fairbanks, AK 99701
907-456-0532

White Mountains National Recreation Area
907-474-2250

Chena River State Recreation Site
907-269-8400



The Aurora is caused by solar energy colliding with the earth's atmosphere. As different gases are struck, they are energized and glow with different colors, similar to a neon light. These ghostly lights are best seen from mid-September through April.

Alaska Public Lands Information Center—Fairbanks

Directions

Located in the heart of downtown Fairbanks, the Alaska Public Lands Information Center is the gateway to Interior and Arctic Alaska.

Summer Activities

During the summer, staff is on-hand to answer questions about recreational opportunities, the Dalton Highway to the north, Denali National Park to the south, and the Chena and Chatanika state recreation areas near Fairbanks. The visitor center hosts exhibits, films and daily programs. Native artist demonstrations are offered intermittently throughout the year.

Winter Activities

During the winter, the "Explore Alaska" series features guest speakers. Classroom and family programs give children and adults the opportunity to explore Alaska through a variety of games, activities and learning adventures.

Visitor Center

The Alaska Public Lands Information Center in Fairbanks is open 7 days a week from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and Tuesday through Saturday during the winter. Visitors can purchase park entrance and parking passes, and books and maps from the Alaska Natural History Association bookstore.



For More Information

Fairbanks Alaska Public Lands
Information Center
250 Cushman, Suite 1A
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone: 907-456-0527
Fax: 907-456-0514
www.nps.gov/aplic



Backcountry Guide



SAFETY CONCERNS include influenza and car accidents, the two major causes of death among Alaska visitors. Visitors to Alaska have traveled a great distance, their sleep patterns and eating habits are disturbed, and they are usually dehydrated. These factors lead to an inability of the body to defend itself against flu and cold viruses, and to drowsiness behind the wheel. Prevention requires sensible scheduling, a proper diet and lots of liquids.

PLAN YOUR HIKE OR TRIP with distances and availability of services in mind. Check the weather and inquire about trail conditions. Let someone know where you are going and when you will return. Plan for delays. Carry extra water, snacks and medical prescriptions.

HYPOTHERMIA can strike in any season. Hypothermia is the critical lowering of the body's core temperature and is signaled by these early symptoms: shivering, numbness, slurred speech, loss of coordination, drowsiness and exhaustion. Avoid hypothermia by eating high-calorie foods and snacks, drinking plenty of water and staying dry. Layer clothing for your level of activity to minimize sweating.

MOSQUITOES are plentiful—there are 25 to 40 different species in Alaska. Currently none of Alaska's mosquitoes are known to carry disease, but circumstances can change quickly. Due to high concentrations of mosquitoes, long-sleeved clothing, head nets and repellent are essential in many areas.

TRAVELING ALONE increases your risk. Travel in groups and be prepared. Cell phones may not work in various parts of Alaska or in the backcountry.

WATER may look pure, but needs to be treated. *Giardia* is widespread in Alaska waters and is highly contagious. Boil water for 3-5 minutes, treat with iodine tablets or use a water filter.

RIVER CROSSINGS can be hazardous, especially late in the day or after a heavy rainfall. Evaluate conditions and be familiar with safe techniques for crossing. Cross early in the day at the widest or most braided portion of the river. Loosen pack straps in case of a fall. Never cross with bare feet.

WILDLIFE is abundant. Moose may appear tame, but can be dangerous. Wolves and fox can carry rabies. Enjoy wildlife quietly and at a safe distance. Never feed any wild animals, and keep a clean camp.



- Plan ahead and prepare.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
- Dispose of waste properly.
- Leave what you find.
- Minimize campfire impacts.
- Respect wildlife.
- Be considerate of others.



Public Use Cabins

There are a number of public use cabins for overnight stays. Cabins generally have a heating stove, bunks or sleeping platforms, table and chairs, and an outhouse. Visitors are responsible for providing food, cook stove and utensils, water and bedding. Most cabins are available for rent year-round, although some are accessible only during certain seasons. Cabin permits are issued on a first-come, first-served basis for noncommercial purposes to anyone over 18 years old. Cabins are managed by different agencies, each with its own guidelines for rental.

Chugach State Park
Eagle River Nature Center
Phone: 907-694-2108
Fax: 907-694-2119
www.ernc.org

Alaska State Parks
Public Information Center
550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1260
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-269-8400
www.akstateparks.org

White Mountains Recreation Area
Bureau of Land Management
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, AK 99709
907-474-2250
www.aurora.ak.blm.gov/WhiteMtns

Camping Passes

Both Anchorage and Fairbanks Public Lands Information Centers sell state and federal park passes. The State of Alaska offers a day-use and a boat-launch pass for residents and non-residents. National park passes are also available at the centers and individual parks. Denali and Kenai Fjords national parks are among the few Alaska parks charging entrance fees. An additional \$15 hologram allows visitors entrance to all federal areas throughout the United States. Golden Access and Golden Age passes are also available.



Safety in Bear Country

Alaska is home to both black bears (*Ursus americanus*) and grizzly or brown bears (*Ursus arctos*). You may encounter bears anywhere along the highways, in the backcountry, and even in the city. All bears are potentially dangerous. A few simple precautions can keep you safe and ensure that Alaska's bears remain healthy and wild.

AVOID ENCOUNTERS

Be alert: Bears are active day and night and may show up anywhere. Watch for tracks, scat or carrion. Avoid salmon streams and berry patches at their peak.

MAKE YOUR PRESENCE KNOWN

If you startle a bear, it may react defensively. Make noise, particularly in thick brush, high grass or near a noisy stream. Sing, yell or clap your hands loudly. Travel in groups and never intentionally approach a bear closer than 1/4 mile.

KEEP A CLEAN CAMP

Bears will investigate any odor. Store food, trash and personal hygiene products in a bag suspended in a tree or use bear-resistant containers (check with the nearest visitor center for loaners). Cook and store food at least 100 feet from your tent or in your vehicle if available.

IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BEAR

DO NOT RUN! Running may elicit a chase response. If the bear does not see you, backtrack or detour quickly. If the bear sees you, back away slowly. Speak in a low, calm voice while waving your arms slowly above your head.

IF A BEAR APPROACHES OR CHARGES

Stand your ground and prepare your deterrent. Keep your pack on. Bears may come within 10 feet before stopping or veering away. Stand still until the bear moves away, then slowly back off.

IF A GRIZZLY ATTACKS, PLAY DEAD

Curl up into a ball or lie flat on the ground, face down and legs apart. Lace your hands behind your neck. If the attack is prolonged, fight back.

IF A BLACK BEAR ATTACKS, FIGHT BACK VIGOROUSLY.

DOES PEPPER SPRAY WORK?

Pepper sprays containing capsaicin, a red pepper extract, have been used with some success as non-lethal deterrents against attacks by bears. The spray must be fired directly in the bear's face at a range of six to eight yards. If discharged upwind, the spray will disable you. Use sprays approved by EPA that contain at least eight ounces of deterrent. Sprays should not be used like insect repellent—don't spread them on your clothes or equipment. If you plan to take it on an airplane, tell the pilot so it can be stored safely outside the plane.

WILL BELLS KEEP BEARS AWAY?

Bears are curious animals and they just might want to investigate that musical jingling. Distinctly human noises are a much better deterrent to bear encounters. Yell, sing, clap your hands loudly or shake a can with pebbles in it.



Wildlife Deserve Our Respect

DON'T FEED THE ANIMALS it is illegal. Animals that come to depend on people for food can become unpredictable and dangerous, and may need to be destroyed.

ENJOY WILDLIFE AT A DISTANCE by using binoculars or a telephoto lens to observe an animal's natural behavior. Avoid shouting, gesturing or otherwise disturbing animals. If an animal's behavior is interrupted by your presence, you are too close.

HELP WILD PARENTS by avoiding nesting areas and limiting your time viewing young animals to 5-10 minutes. You may be keeping a parent from warming its eggs or tending offspring. Wild animals can be fiercely protective of their young; never get between a mother and its young.

LEAVE YOUR PETS AT HOME for your safety and theirs. Pets can chase wildlife, dig up nests, kill baby animals, or lead an angry animal back to you. A wild animal may injure or kill your pet in protection of life or territory.

PICK UP LITTER and pack out what you pack in. Garbage attracts bears and other wildlife. Litter, especially fishing line, can entangle or trap wildlife.

RESPECT WILD ANIMALS who are engaged in a daily struggle to find food, shelter and water necessary for survival. Human disturbance can mean the difference between life and death. Remember that we are the visitors.

REMIND OTHERS of their ethical responsibility. Help protect and preserve the natural wonders of Alaska for the future—it is up to all of us.



Tundra and Taiga

Much of Southcentral and Interior Alaska is boreal forest, part of an ecosystem that encircles the higher latitudes of the entire northern hemisphere. Stretching across Russia, Canada, Scandinavia, and parts of China and Mongolia, this ecosystem represents a third of the world's forests. Boreal forests, or taiga, are areas of extreme climate. Temperatures can vary as much as 160 degrees between summer and winter. Summer days are long, but daylight in the winter is scarce and without heat. Common species in this harsh environment include white and black spruce, birch, aspen, cottonwood, larch, willow and alder. The boreal forest supports moose, black and brown bear, lynx, wolf, snowshoe hare, ptarmigan and tree squirrel, among other species.

At lower elevations, stream, pond and river areas are home to red currant, high bush cranberry and watermelon berries. Cottonwood, black spruce and alder thrive near water. Wild geranium, monkshood, fireweed and prickly rose are just a few of the wildflowers seen in these areas. Animals specific to wet lowlands include moose, beaver, muskrat, waterfowl and wood frog. Bird and wildlife enthusiasts enjoy the diversity of wetland animals, while hikers generally seek higher ground.

At higher elevations, above 3,000 feet, alpine tundra is home to a different community of species. These areas are typically treeless and windy. Here willows, dwarf birch, alpine bearberry, blueberry, grasses, lichens and mosses hug the landscape. A surprising variety of fragile, adaptive wildflowers make the most of the short spring and summer. Wildflowers begin blooming in late May and peak in late June. Animal species include Dall sheep, mountain goats, pika, caribou, fox, golden eagle and ground squirrel. Mountain passes are migration routes for raptors and other birds in the spring and fall.

Alaska's boreal forest holds an important place in the state's history and character. Subsistence hunting and gathering are important to Native and rural populations. Plants and animals have long provided materials for food, shelter, transportation, medicine and crafts. Scientists claim this forest ecosystem, in helping to purify large masses of air and water, is a primary factor in the health of the earth. The northern boreal forest remains a mainstay for wildlife, recreation, traditional uses, and as a mitigating factor in global climate change.

